

Natasha Rekhtman  
Justin A. Bishop

# Quick Reference Handbook for Surgical Pathologists

**The Art of Writing a Pathology Report:  
What we Say ... and What we Mean ☺**  
*by Natasha Rekhtman, Diana Molavi, and Justin Bishop*

What we Say:	What we Mean:
This is a difficult case	I have no idea what this is
This lesion is difficult to classify	I am not familiar with the new WHO classification
Dr. X concurs with the diagnosis	Sure am glad somebody else here knows what this thing is
Case was shown at the quality assurance conference	We're all going down together
Invasion cannot be excluded	Probably invasive but don't feel like searching too hard ... and it's time for my coffee break!
Lesion is best seen on permanent sections	We missed it on frozen
Stains are suboptimal	Did not work at all
Stains are non-contributory	Stained the wrong block
Stains are non-evaluable	Forgot to order
Tissue with cautery artifact	PLEASE ... turn down that bovie!
Tumor approaches the margin	Positive margin but am going to dinner with the surgeon, so gotta be nice...
Tumor approaches the margin (#2)	Positive margin but am afraid of the surgeon
Representative sections submitted	One
Innumerable (as in polyps or mitotic figures)	More than 10
Rare (as in mitoses)	I didn't see any, but if I say zero there will be three on the first field when I show this case
No specific pathologic changes/ Non-diagnostic findings/ Mild chronic cholecystitis (gallbladder) / Chronic inflammation and lymphoid hyperplasia (tonsil)/ Reactive epithelial changes (esophagus)	Completely normal
Specimen did not survive processing	Was dropped on the floor and stepped on
Specimen was entirely submitted	Can't send me back to the bucket!
Possible lymph nodes	Hunks of fat
Recommend clinical correlation	Not my problem anymore!

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To Bob, Mark, Galina, and Katya.

Natasha Rekhtman

To Ashley, Riley, and Avery.

Justin Bishop

# Preface

## About this book

This book is a compilation of high-yield at-a-glance summaries for various topics frequently needed in a quick reference format at the microscope (or when cramming for the boards). As recently minted pathologists, we compiled this book from the perspective of pathologists-in-training and we gathered topics which we wanted to have in quick summary format during our recent residency and fellowships. Although written with the trainees in mind, the book may also be of interest to practicing pathologists as a practical quick reference by the microscope.

The book has a unique layout in that most of the information is presented in tables and diagrams accompanied by minimal explanatory text. Our motto for this book was to boil the information down to the essentials and key elements but with just enough commentary to be accessible to a newcomer to pathology. This book is not intended as a substitute for original resources or authoritative texts, but rather its purpose is to bring under one roof compact summaries for various types of information that trainees and practicing pathologists now search for in many different sources, and give the conceptual “lay of the land” with emphasis on “must know” facts. Certainly decisions about what constitutes “must know” and “high-yield” are highly subjective, and we apologize for any omissions which are inevitable by the nature of this book.

Our other main objective was to make the format of the book as user-friendly and easy to navigate as possible, such that one can quickly find the needed information. We thank our Springer editors for agreeing to publish this book in a non-standard format to help achieve this goal.

## Contents

The focus is not organ-based morphologic criteria for which there are many excellent quick-summary resources, but rather the focus is everything else that helps a pathologist make a diagnosis (and pass the boards) with emphasis on the vast and fast-growing fields of immunohistochemistry (IHC) and molecular markers.

The book starts with unique introductory “primers” – at-a-glance 1-page summaries with diagrams on the main types of marker applications and high-yield facts (such as peculiar principles of cytokeratin designation). We highlighted the rules and biological principles behind various immunostains and special stains to help residents reason through a problem rather than having to resort to memorized panels. The other part of the IHC section contains a large compilation of general and organ-based applications of IHC with numerous immunopanel. This includes the classics (such as lung adenocarcinoma versus mesothelioma) and more recent applications (such as the work-up for mismatch repair proteins).

Other sections of the book contain various quick references that are often needed at the microscope but require frequent reminders. This includes a compilation of grading systems, common prognostic systems, and other criteria that are difficult to keep committed to memory (such as size cut-points for various micro-entities like thyroid papillary microcarcinoma). Also included are summaries for tumor syndromes with a particularly practical “slide-to-syndrome” summary where we highlighted which diagnoses or features should trigger consideration of a syndrome. In tumor genetics and cytogenetics we highlighted which tumors have unique molecular characteristics that can aid in the diagnosis or are used in prognostic/predictive testing.

Another high-yield section that is not usually covered in most pathology books is a compilation of quick clinical references geared for pathologists. This section contains resources that help pathologists interpret clinical information that may be highly informative in the differential diagnosis of tumors, including a primer on metastasis (what metastatic patterns are classic vs. exceptional for certain tumors) and serologic tumor markers. We also included a brief summary of targeted therapies for which pathologists may be asked to perform predictive marker testing.

Even though the focus of the book is not organ-based morphologic criteria, we included several sections with differentials that cut across all organs. For example, this section includes at-a-glance differentials for small round blue cell tumors, and classic differentials for certain morphologic features (such as which tumors are classically associated with granulomas or have stag-horn vessels). We also included an illustrated guide to microorganisms. Finally, we compiled an illustrated glossary of histopathologic descriptors with illustrations of common objects these terms are said to resemble (such as storiform or palisaded, and what Orphan Annie’s eyes actually look like!). Keep this by your side as you begin to tackle the large pathology books! We are also very excited to include a handy guide for pathology web resources by Terina Chen and a user-friendly CPT coding summary by Diana Molavi.

## Sources

We used a variety of sources, including standard books and mountains of primary literature. However, most importantly our “world view” of pathology this early in our careers comes primarily from our outstanding teachers at The Johns Hopkins Hospital and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. From them we learned the approaches and principles that come only after years of experience but cannot be learned by reading books and papers. We were fortunate to learn pathology from these bril-

liant diagnosticians and generous educators, who shared their knowledge with us through sign outs, lectures and weekly unknowns during our residency at Johns Hopkins. We therefore can only take credit for organizing and presenting this stream of knowledge in a format easily accessible to a newcomer to pathology, and we give all credit for the many useful pearls and principles in this book to our teachers. On the other hand, we take full responsibility for any inaccuracies that may have inadvertently escaped our attention.

### **In conclusion**

It is our hope that this book will be your best friend both at the microscope and in the late night hours of studying for the boards. Because the type of information covered in this book is rapidly evolving, please be sure to check the most current sources.

Natasha Rekhtman and Justin Bishop

### **How this book came about – part 1**

I started working on this book in my second year of residency at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, although at that time I did not yet know that this was what I was doing. Like many pathologists, I am a very visual learner, and I firmly believe that a good table or diagram is worth many pages of text. Therefore I was desperately looking for resources that succinctly summarized the mountains of information I was trying to absorb, particularly in a format that was tabular or diagrammatic and was amenable to quick learning of the essentials. While there were many great resources for histologic criteria, what I felt was missing were quick references for the new and fast growing fields of immunostains and molecular markers, as well as other types of material frequently needed in pathologists' daily work but not available in a single source. I therefore started compiling these summaries and diagrams for my own use, and later started sharing them with my co-residents. After getting feedback that others were finding these summaries useful, and after I realized that creating them was an incredible motivator to learn and digest the information, I put together a small handbook which was generously printed by the Department of Pathology at Johns Hopkins as a Resident Manual in 2004 and 2007. Now in collaboration with Justin Bishop as my coeditor and main coauthor and with contributions from many former and current Hopkins residents and fellows and my current colleagues at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, this book has morphed into what it is today. Justin joined forces with me in the last two years, and I could not have dreamt of a more dedicated and talented collaborator, who made it possible to get this project completed.

Natasha Rekhtman

### **How this book came about – part 2**

My first interaction with this book (universally known as the "Green Book" at Hopkins) was in 2006. The more senior residents had copies of a magical book that had all the answers I was seeking as a pathology intern. Desperate for something to boil down the massive amounts of information into one resource, my fellow first-year residents and I assembled crude bootleg copies of it. At the end of that year as she left Hopkins, Natasha distributed a new edition which remains a fixture at my microscope to this day. However, as the years passed and new waves of residents entered our program, original copies of the Green Book became increasingly scarce, and the quality of copies became increasingly poor as they became 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation. My chief resident year, I was frequently confronted with a question from the junior residents: "Where can I get a copy of that Green Book?" We had heard rumors about the possibility of it being published, but no one at Hopkins knew the status of the now-mythical Green Book. Intent on getting an answer, I contacted Natasha. As luck would have it, she needed a collaborator to push the project past the finish line, and that collaborator became me. Initially a great way to study for my boards, working on the book then became a means to stay on top of the newest information as I started signing out surgical pathology. Although perhaps it was a bigger commitment than I initially realized, it was well worth the effort, and I am extremely grateful to Natasha for allowing me to be a part of this very special project.

Justin Bishop



## Acknowledgements

We were fortunate to learn pathology as residents and assistants in surgical pathology from the brilliant diagnosticians and dedicated educators of The Johns Hopkins surgical pathology team and other divisions. We are most grateful to all our teachers for sharing with us their knowledge and wisdom that serves as the foundation of this book.

We would like to sincerely thank all coauthors and reviewers for contributing their brainpower to this project with special thanks to Ashlie Burkart, Terina Chen, Amy Duffield, Diana Molavi and Janis Taube for lead-authoring various sections of this book. Very special thanks to Ashlie Burkart, Shien Michelli and Diana Molavi for reviewing various portions of this book, and penciling in multiple suggestions and question marks (as well as smiley faces...) and for being the constant source of encouragement over the years. We are most grateful to all Hopkins faculty and trainees for making suggestions/corrections and enthusiastic support over the years. This book would not be what it is today if it had not been vetted by several generations of keen Hopkins residents. We also want to thank our publishing team Gabriele Schroeder, Sandra Lesny, and Ellen Blasig at Springer and Patrick Waltemate at le-tex for all their efforts on behalf of this book.

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Natasha Rekhtman and Justin Bishop

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## Table of Contents – At a Glance

<b>1 Immunostains: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Natasha Rekhtman and Justin Bishop</i>	
<b>2 Immunostains: Organ Systems .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<i>Natasha Rekhtman, Ashlie Burkhart, Amy Duffield, Janis Taube, Justin Bishop</i>	
<b>3 Immunostains: Antibody Index.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<i>Justin Bishop, Amy Duffield, Diana Molavi, Natasha Rekhtman</i>	
<b>4 Special Stains .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<i>Justin Bishop, Jennifer Broussard, Natasha Rekhtman</i>	
<b>5 Grading (and Classification) Systems.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<i>Justin Bishop, Amy Duffield, Diana Molavi, Natasha Rekhtman</i>	
<b>6 Potpourri of Quick Morphologic References .....</b>	<b>99</b>
<i>Natasha Rekhtman and Justin Bishop</i>	
<b>7 Tumor Syndromes.....</b>	<b>109</b>
<i>Justin Bishop, Ashlie Burkhart, Natasha Rekhtman</i>	
<b>8 Tumor Genetics and Cytogenetics .....</b>	<b>119</b>
<i>Justin Bishop, Amy Duffield, Ashlie Burkhart, Natasha Rekhtman</i>	
<b>9 Quick Clinical References for Pathologists.....</b>	<b>125</b>
<i>Justin Bishop and Natasha Rekhtman</i>	
<b>10 Pathology Web Resources.....</b>	<b>131</b>
<i>Terina Chen</i>	
<b>11 CPT (Current Procedural Terminology) Coding Quick Reference.....</b>	<b>135</b>
<i>Diana Molavi</i>	
<b>12 It Looks Like WHAT? An Illustrated Glossary of Histopathologic Descriptors.....</b>	<b>139</b>
<i>Natasha Rekhtman and Kathryn Villa</i>	
<b>References.....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Subject Index.....</b>	<b>171</b>

# Detailed Table of Contents

<b>1 Immunostains: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Natasha Rekhtman and Justin Bishop</i>	
<b>General Background .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Applications of Immunohistochemistry in Anatomic Pathology.....	1
Markers of Differentiation at a Glance.....	2
Location, Location, Location! Primer on Location of Antigens.....	3
Primer on Cytokeratins .....	4
CK7 and CK20 Expression Profiles Diagram .....	7
CK7 and CK20 Expression Profiles.....	8
Expression of EMA, CEA and Vimentin in Carcinomas .....	9
Primer on Markers of Muscle Differentiation .....	10
Primer on Markers of Neuroendocrine Differentiation .....	11
Primer on Markers of Melanocytic Differentiation .....	12
Primer on Markers of Neuroglial Differentiation.....	13
Primer on Markers of Vascular Differentiation.....	14
Primer on Assessment of Invasion .....	15
<b>General Panels.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Differential Diagnosis of Undifferentiated Malignant Neoplasm.....	16
Carcinoma of Unknown Primary: Site-Specific Markers.....	17
Differential Diagnosis of Small Round Blue Cell Tumors.....	18
Differential Diagnosis of Spindle Cell Tumors.....	19
Differential Diagnosis of Neuroendocrine and Neuroectodermal Neoplasms .....	20
<b>Predictive Markers.....</b>	<b>20</b>
Semiquantitative assessment (ER/PR, HER2, EGFR).....	21
<b>2 Immunostains: Organ Systems .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<i>Natasha Rekhtman, Ashlie Burkhart, Amy Duffield, Janis Taube, Tara Miller, Ross Miller, Justin Bishop</i>	
<b>Breast .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Breast: Key Markers at a Glance.....	23
Markers for Myoepithelial Cells (and what else they stain).....	23
Breast: Immunoprofiles at a Glance.....	23
DDx of In Situ Proliferations .....	24
DDx of Papillary Lesions.....	24
DDx of Low Grade Spindle Cell Proliferations in the Breast.....	24
DDx of Pagetoid Proliferations in the Nipple .....	24
<b>Genitourinary Tract.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Prostate and Bladder .....</b>	<b>25</b>
Prostate: Key Markers at a Glance.....	25
Prostate: Immunoprofiles at a Glance .....	25
Reactive Urothelial Atypia vs. Carcinoma in Situ.....	26
Dx of the Depth of Invasion by Urothelial Carcinoma.....	26
DDx of Adenocarcinoma Involving the Bladder.....	26
Adenocarcinoma of Bladder and Prostate vs. Mimics.....	26
Urothelial Carcinoma vs. High-Grade Prostate Carcinoma.....	26
<b>Kidney and Adrenal .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Kidney: Key Markers at a Glance .....	27
Kidney: Immunoprofiles at a Glance .....	27
Adrenal: Immunoprofiles at a Glance .....	27
DDx of Main Types of Renal Cortical Neoplasms.....	28
DDx of Cytologically Bland Renal Tumors with Tubulo-papillary Architecture.....	28
DDx of Renal Tumors with Clear Cells .....	28
Renal Cell Carcinoma vs. Adrenocortical Neoplasm .....	28

<b>Testis</b> .....	29
Testicular Neoplasms: Key Multipurpose Markers at a Glance.....	29
Testicular Neoplasms: Immunoprofiles at a Glance.....	29
<b>Head and Neck</b> .....	29
<b>Thyroid, Parathyroid, and Sinonasal Tract</b> .....	30
Thyroid and Parathyroid Neoplasms: Immunoprofiles at a Glance.....	30
DDx of Poorly Differentiated Neoplasms in the Sinonasal Tract.....	30
DDx of Basaloid Carcinomas of the Head and Neck.....	30
<b>Salivary Gland</b> .....	31
Salivary Gland Neoplasms: Immunoprofiles (and Special Stains) at a Glance.....	31
DDx of Salivary Gland Tumors with Clear Cells.....	31
<b>Gastrointestinal Tract</b> .....	31
<b>Pancreas</b> .....	32
Pancreas: Immunoprofiles at a Glance.....	32
DDx of Pancreatic Neoplasms with Cellular (no desmoplastic stroma) Acinar/Solid Growth Pattern.....	32
<b>Tubular Gastrointestinal Tract</b> .....	33
DDx for the Site of Origin of Intestinal Metaplasia at the GE junction.....	33
Evaluation of Dysplasia in IBD.....	33
Diagnosis of Autoimmune Metaplastic Atrophic Gastritis/ “Pernicious Anemia”.....	33
Testing of DNA Mismatch Repair Proteins <i>by Ashlie Burkart</i> .....	34
<b>Liver</b> .....	35
Hepatocellular carcinoma vs. Cholangiocarcinoma vs. Metastatic Adenocarcinoma.....	35
Hepatocellular carcinoma vs. Benign Hepatocellular Nodule.....	35
<b>Thoracic</b> .....	35
<b>Lung and Thymus</b> .....	35
Lung: Immunoprofiles at a Glance.....	36
DDx of Neuroendocrine Neoplasms of the Lung.....	36
Carcinoid Tumorlet vs. Minute Meningothelial-like Nodule.....	36
DDx of Thymic Epithelial Neoplasms.....	36
<b>Mesothelioma</b> .....	37
Mesothelioma vs. Adenocarcinoma.....	37
DDx Malignant vs. Reactive Mesothelial Proliferations.....	37
<b>Soft Tissue</b> .....	38
Select Mesenchymal Tumors: Immunoprofile at a Glance.....	38
<b>Central Nervous System</b> .....	39
Lesions of Central Nervous System at a Glance.....	39
Astrocytoma vs. Oligodendroglioma.....	39
DDx of Clear Cell Nested Tumors in CNS.....	39
DDx of Dural-Based Spindle Cell Tumors.....	39
DDx of Myxoid and Chondromyxoid Lesions of the CNS/Coverings.....	39
<b>Gynecologic Tract</b> .....	40
Gynecologic Tract: Key Markers at a Glance.....	40
Gynecologic Tract: Immunoprofiles at a Glance.....	40
Ovarian Germ Cell Tumors at a Glance.....	40
DDx of Dysplastic vs. Reactive Squamous Intraepithelial Lesions of the Cervix.....	41
DDx of Uterine Carcinomas.....	41
Endometrial vs. Endocervical Adenocarcinoma.....	41
DDx of Uterine Spindle Cell Neoplasms.....	41
DDx of Serous Tubal Intraepithelial Carcinoma.....	41
DDx of Ovarian Tumors with Tubular/Trabecular Pattern.....	41
DDx of Trophoblastic Tumors.....	42
DDx of Hydatidiform Moles.....	42
<b>Skin</b> <i>by Janis Taube, Natasha Rekhtman, Justin Bishop</i> .....	43
<b>General</b> .....	43
Key Melanocytic Markers at a Glance.....	43
Select Skin Lesions: Immunoprofiles at a Glance.....	43
DDx of Melanocytic Lesions.....	43

DDx of Cutaneous Storiform Spindle Cell Lesions.....	44
DDx of Cutaneous High-Grade Neuroendocrine Carcinomas.....	44
DDx of Ugly-Looking Spindle Cell Neoplasms of the Skin .....	44
DDx of Pagetoid Proliferations in the Skin .....	44
DDx of Mammary vs. Extra-mammary Paget's Disease.....	44
<b>Cutaneous Lymphomas</b> by Janis Taube .....	45
Classification of Cutaneous T Cell Lymphomas .....	45
Classification of Primary Cutaneous B-cell Lymphomas .....	45
<b>Hematopoietic System</b> by Amy Duffield, Justin Bishop, Tara Miller, Ross Miller, Natasha Rekhtman.....	46
<b>General</b> .....	46
Hematopoietic Markers at a Glance .....	46
Markers for Identification of Blasts .....	46
Cytochemistry for Identification of Blasts .....	46
Stages of Lymphocyte Differentiation and Corresponding Lymphomas.....	47
<b>B cell Lymphomas</b> .....	49
Reactive Hyperplasia versus Follicular Lymphoma.....	49
Low-grade B cell lymphomas .....	49
Hodgkin Lymphoma .....	50
DDx of Plasma Cell-Rich Neoplasms .....	50
<b>Immunoprofiles of Select Hematopoietic Disorders</b> .....	51
B-cell and Plasma Cell Neoplasms .....	51
T-cell Neoplasms .....	52
Other (Extranodal NK/T-cell lymphoma, Myeloid sarcoma, Paroxysmal Nocturnal hemoglobinuria).....	52
DDx of Post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorders.....	53
<b>Histiocytic and Dendritic Cell Lesions</b> .....	54
<b>3 Immunostains: Antibody Index</b> .....	55
<i>Justin Bishop, Amy Duffield, Diana Molavi, Natasha Rekhtman</i>	
<b>Common Multipurpose Immunostains at a Glance</b> .....	55
<b>Alphabetical Antibody Index</b> .....	56
<b>4 Special Stains</b> .....	69
<i>Justin Bishop, Jennifer Broussard, Natasha Rekhtman</i>	
<b>Quick Primer on Mucins</b> .....	69
<b>Special Stains at a Glance</b> .....	70
Carbohydrates: Glycogen and mucosubstances.....	70
Connective Tissue.....	70
Other Common Applications .....	70
Microorganisms .....	71
<b>Alphabetical Index of Special Stain</b> by Jennifer Broussard, Natasha Rekhtman, Justin Bishop .....	72
<b>5 Grading (and Classification) Systems</b> .....	77
<i>Justin Bishop, Amy Duffield, Diana Molavi, Natasha Rekhtman</i>	
<b>General</b> .....	77
Grading of Adenocarcinoma, NOS .....	77
Grading of Squamous Cell Carcinoma, NOS.....	77
<b>Breast</b> .....	78
Elston Grading of Infiltrating Breast Cancer.....	78
Nuclear Grading of Ductal Carcinoma in Situ .....	78
Grading of Phyllodes Tumor.....	78
<b>Genitourinary Tract</b> .....	78
<b>Prostate and Kidney</b> .....	79
Gleason Grading of Prostate Cancer .....	79
Grading of Prostatic Intraepithelial Neoplasia .....	79
Fuhrman Nuclear Grading of Renal Cell Carcinoma .....	79

<b>Bladder and Wilms Tumor</b> .....	80
The WHO (2003)/ISUP Consensus Classification of Non-invasive (In Situ) Papillary Urothelial Neoplasms.....	80
The WHO (2003)/ISUP Consensus Classification of Flat In Situ Urothelial Neoplasms .....	80
Wilms tumor: Criteria for Anaplasia (unfavorable histology).....	80
<b>Head and Neck</b> .....	81
Grading of Thyroid Carcinomas .....	81
Grading of Salivary Gland Carcinomas .....	81
Mucoepidermoid Carcinoma, AFIP Grading System.....	81
Evaluation of Autoimmune Sialadenitis (Sjögren's Disease) in Labial Biopsy .....	81
<b>Gastrointestinal Tract</b> .....	82
Grading of Pancreatic Intraepithelial Neoplasia and Pancreatic Cystic Mucinous Neoplasms (IPMN and MCN).....	82
Grading of Dysplasia in Barrett's Mucosa .....	83
Grading and Staging of Chronic Viral Hepatitis .....	83
Criteria for Acute Liver Allograft Rejection .....	83
<b>Sarcoma Grading (not for the Faint of Heart!)</b> .....	84
<b>Neuroendocrine and Neuroectodermal Neoplasms</b> .....	85
Pulmonary Neuroendocrine Neoplasms, WHO 2004 Classification .....	85
Gastroenteropancreatic Neuroendocrine Neoplasms, WHO 2010 Classification.....	85
Neuroblastoma, Revised Shimada Grading System .....	86
Olfactory Neuroblastoma/Esthesioneuroblastoma, Hyams Grading System.....	86
<b>Central Nervous System</b> .....	87
Meningioma, WHO Grading System.....	87
Gliomas, WHO Grading System.....	87
<b>Gynecologic Tract</b> .....	88
Endometrioid Carcinoma, FIGO Grading.....	88
Smooth Muscle Neoplasms of the Uterus.....	88
Epithelioid Smooth Muscle Neoplasms of the Uterus.....	88
Grading of Immature Ovarian Teratomas .....	88
Dating of Endometrium <i>by Diana Molavi</i> .....	89
Grading and Staging of Infections in the Placenta .....	89
<b>Hematopoietic System <i>by Amy Duffield</i></b> .....	90
Follicular Lymphoma, WHO Grading System.....	90
Diagnostic Criteria for Plasma Cell Disorders, 2009 Update.....	90
Myelodysplastic Syndromes, WHO Classification .....	91
Acute Myeloid Leukemia NOS, WHO Classification.....	92
Myeloproliferative Disorders, WHO Classification.....	93
Classification of Post-transplant Lymphoproliferative Disorders .....	94
<b>Transplant Pathology</b> .....	95
Grading of Lung Allograft Rejection, ISHLT system.....	95
Grading of Acute Graft-versus-Host Disease in Intestinal Biopsy.....	95
Grading of Acute Graft-versus-Host Disease in Skin Biopsy .....	95
<b>The Good the Bad and the Ugly: Prognostic Features in Neoplasms with Difficult-to-Predict Behavior</b> .....	96
Adrenocortical Neoplasms, Pheochromocytoma, Solitary Fibrous Tumor .....	96
Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumor, Parathyroid Neoplasms, Sertoli and Leydig Cell Tumors .....	97
<b>Criteria for "Micro-entities" in Various Organs</b> .....	98
<b>6 Potpourri of Quick Morphologic References</b> .....	99
<i>Natasha Rekhtman and Justin Bishop</i>	
<b>Tumor Differentials 101</b> .....	99
Generic Tumor Types .....	99
Tumors by Cell Type .....	100
Tumors by Architectural Pattern.....	100
Potpourri of Differentials.....	101
Benign Mimics of Malignancy 101 – watch out!.....	101
Small Round Blue Cell Tumors of Adulthood.....	102
Small Round Blue Cell Tumors of Childhood .....	103



<b>Quick Guide to Identification of Microorganisms in Tissue</b> .....	103
There's Fungus among us! Quick Reference for Histologic Identification of Fungi .....	104
Quick Reference for Histological Identification of Viruses .....	107
Reference for Tumors with Viral Associations .....	108
<b>7 Tumor Syndromes</b> .....	<b>109</b>
<i>Justin Bishop, Ashlie Burkart, Natasha Rekhtman</i>	
<b>Quick Summary of Tumor Syndromes</b> .....	109
Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia Syndromes, Neurocutaneous Syndromes .....	109
Syndromes Associated with Renal Neoplasms, Syndromes Associated with Tumors of Bone .....	110
Syndromes Associated with GI Polyps and Neoplasms <i>by Ashlie Burkart and Natasha Rekhtman</i> .....	111
Syndromes Associated with Breast Cancer, Syndromes Associated with Skin Tumors .....	113
Other .....	114
<b>"Slide to Syndrome" by Justin Bishop, Ashlie Burkart, Natasha Rekhtman</b> .....	115
<b>Lynch Syndrome: Clinicopathologic predictors and testing algorithms by Justin Bishop, Ashlie Burkart, Natasha Rekhtman</b> .....	117
<b>8 Tumor Genetics and Cytogenetics</b> .....	<b>119</b>
<i>Justin Bishop, Amy Duffield, Ashlie Burkart, Natasha Rekhtman</i>	
<b>Molecular Associations at a Glance</b> .....	119
<b>Cytogenetic and Genetic Changes in Leukemia/Lymphoma by Amy Duffield</b> .....	120
B Cell Leukemia/Lymphoma .....	120
T Cell Leukemia/Lymphoma .....	120
Myeloid Leukemia and Myelodysplastic Syndrome .....	121
<b>Cytogenetic and Genetic Changes in Solid Tumors by Justin Bishop, Ashlie Burkart, Natasha Rekhtman</b> .....	122
Select Solid Tumors with Recurrent Genetic Alterations .....	122
Brain and Meninges .....	123
Recurrent Genetic Alterations in Select Carcinomas .....	123
<b>9 Quick Clinical References for Pathologists</b> .....	<b>125</b>
<i>Justin Bishop and Natasha Rekhtman</i>	
<b>Metastasis "To and From": a Quick Reference</b> .....	125
General principles .....	125
Metastasis "From → To" .....	126
Metastasis "To → From" .....	127
<b>Serologic Tumor Markers: Common Associations</b> .....	128
<b>Targeted Therapies and Predictive Markers – Welcome to the Future!</b> .....	129
Solid Tumors .....	129
Selected Hematopoietic Tumors .....	130
<b>10 Pathology Web Resources</b> .....	<b>131</b>
<i>Terina Chen</i>	
<b>11 CPT (Current Procedural Terminology) Coding Quick Reference</b> .....	<b>135</b>
<i>Diana Molavi</i>	
<b>12 It Looks Like WHAT? An Illustrated Glossary of Histopathologic Descriptors</b> .....	<b>139</b>
<i>Natasha Rekhtman and Kathryn Villa</i>	
<b>References</b> .....	<b>161</b>
<b>Subject Index</b> .....	<b>171</b>

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## Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Designations

\*\*See IHC index for alternative designations of antibodies/antigens

AFIP – Armed Forces Institute of Pathology  
 AJCC – American Joint Committee on Cancer  
 ALL – acute lymphoblastic leukemia/lymphoma  
 AML – acute myeloid leukemia  
 BAC – bronchioloalveolar carcinoma  
 Bx – biopsy  
 CA – carcinoma  
 CD – cluster of differentiation (as in CD3, CD20, etc.)  
 CHR – chromogranin  
 CIS – carcinoma in situ  
 CK – cytokeratin(s)  
 CLL/SLL – chronic lymphocytic leukemia/small lymphocytic lymphoma  
 CMV – cytomegalovirus  
 CNS – central nervous system  
 CRC – colorectal carcinoma  
 CT – computed tomography  
 Derm – dermatopathology  
 DNA – deoxyribonucleic acid  
 DDx – differential diagnosis  
 DLBCL – diffuse large B cell lymphoma  
 Dx – diagnosis  
 EBV – Epstein-Barr virus  
 EM – electron microscopy  
 ER – estrogen receptor  
 FL – follicular lymphoma  
 GI – gastrointestinal  
 GIST – gastrointestinal stromal tumor  
 GU – genitourinary  
 GYN – gynecologic  
 HCC – hepatocellular carcinoma  
 H&E – hematoxylin and eosin  
 H&N – head and neck  
 Heme – hematopathology  
 HHV8 – Human Herpesvirus 8  
 HMWCK – high molecular weight cytokeratins  
 HPF – high-power field (40X)  
 HPC – hemangiopericytoma  
 HPV – human papillomavirus  
 HSV – herpes simplex virus

HTLV – Human T-lymphotropic virus  
 ID – identification or identify  
 IHC – immunohistochemistry  
 IPMN – intraductal papillary mucinous neoplasm  
 ISH – in situ hybridization  
 JHH – Johns Hopkins Hospital  
 LMWCK – low molecular weight cytokeratins  
 LN – lymph node  
 MCL – mantle cell lymphoma  
 MCN – mucinous cystic neoplasm  
 MD – moderately differentiated  
 ME – myoepithelial  
 MEC – myoepithelial cells  
 Met – metastasis  
 MPNST – malignant peripheral nerve sheath tumor  
 MSKCC – Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center  
 MZL – marginal zone lymphoma  
 NE – neuroendocrine  
 NK – natural killer  
 NLPHL – nodular lymphocyte predominant Hodgkin Lymphoma  
 NOS – not otherwise specified  
 PCR – polymerase chain reaction  
 PD – poorly differentiated  
 PEComa – perivascular epithelioid cell tumor  
 PET – positron emission tomography  
 PNET – primitive neuroectodermal tumor  
 PR – progesterone receptor  
 PTC – papillary thyroid carcinoma  
 RBC – red blood cell  
 RCC – renal cell carcinoma  
 R-S cell – Reed Sternberg cell  
 Rx – therapy, treatment  
 SmCC – small cell carcinoma  
 SqCC – squamous cell carcinoma  
 SRBCT – small round blue cell tumor  
 SYN – synaptophysin  
 TB – tuberculosis  
 vs. – versus  
 WD – well differentiated  
 WHO – World Health Organization

### Immunohistochemistry reactivity code

+++	Overexpressed or consistently diffuse
+	Positive
+/-	Usually positive
-/+	Usually negative
-	Negative

# Chapter 1 Immunostains: Introduction

by Natasha Rekhtman and Justin Bishop

## Applications of Immunohistochemistry (IHC) in Anatomic Pathology (select examples)

### 1. DIAGNOSIS OF TUMORS:

#### a. Classification of poorly differentiated neoplasms:

carcinoma (cytokeratin+) vs.  
lymphoma (CD45+) vs.  
melanoma (S100+, Melan-A+, HMB45+)

#### b. Diagnosis of carcinoma of unknown primary:

colon (CDX2+) vs.  
lung (TTF-1+) vs.  
prostate (PSA+)

#### c. Diagnosis of invasion:

loss of myoepithelial cells (breast cancer)  
loss of basal cells (prostate cancer)  
loss of basement membrane/collagen type IV (various carcinomas, rarely used)

### 2. ASSESSMENT OF MARKERS REFLECTING PROGNOSIS

#### (“PROGNOSTIC” MARKERS):

Ki67/MIB1 (general proliferation marker)  
p53 (general marker of apoptosis)<sup>1</sup>  
HER2 (adverse prognosis in breast cancer)  
CD38 (adverse prognosis in chronic lymphocytic leukemia)

### 3. ASSESSMENT OF MARKERS REFLECTING A THERAPEUTIC RESPONSE

#### (“PREDICTIVE” OR “THERANOSTIC” MARKERS):

ER/PR (Tamoxifen for breast cancer)  
HER2 (Herceptin for breast cancer)  
c-kit (Gleevec for GIST, CML, other; mutations more predictive than IHC)

### 4. DETECTION OF MICROMETASTASES:

melanoma (melanocytic markers)  
breast cancer (cytokeratins)

### 5. IDENTIFICATION OF INFECTIOUS ORGANISMS<sup>2</sup>:

viruses (HSV, CMV)  
other organisms (Toxoplasma, Pneumocystis)

1. It may appear counterintuitive that p53, a well-known tumor-suppressor, is overexpressed in various tumors. This occurs because inactivating mutations in *p53* also disable protein degradation and lead to a robust p53 overexpression. In essence, robust overexpression of p53 is used as a surrogate marker for *p53* gene mutation.
2. Currently IHC is not widely used to identify bacteria and fungi (this is likely to change). These organisms are primarily evaluated by special stains (such as GMS), and some viruses may be identified by in situ hybridization (EBV, HPV).